

25 July 2005

Army Times (Navy Times, Air Force Times Marine Corps Times)

“Rating Rumsfeld:

Could a survey used to assess military leaders gauge the state of his Defense Department?”
By Thomas J. Raleigh

“I’ve offered my resignation to the president twice, and he has decided that he would prefer that he not accept it, and that’s his call.”

- Defense Secretary Rumsfeld in testimony to Congress, June 23, 2005

Despite being blistered by Democrats – and questioned even by Republicans, about his handling of the Iraq war at a recent Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, Defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld appears to retain the confidence of President Bush.

Still, a steady stream of news reports continues to highlight problems facing the military under Rumsfeld’s watch. Most recently, these included his staunch defense of the value and usefulness of the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which many contend has become the best recruiting tool for terrorist leaders – and a defense issued amid myriad allegations of abuse of detainees in U.S. custody.

Other issues range from the Defense Intelligence Agency’s contribution to the intelligence failures on Iraq’s supposed weapons of mass destruction to the Iraq war’s worsening toll on military recruiting and retention, which has some officials worried about the viability of the all-volunteer force.

In truth, many think Donald Rumsfeld should have offered his resignation months ago, for various reasons. Among them:

- The tragic and costly ramifications of not planning - at all - for the post-conflict phase in Iraq.
- Alienating important allies with dismissive gestures such as references to “Old Europe.”
- Force exhaustion and declining enlistment.
- The Abu Ghraib prison scandal and detainee deaths there and in other U.S. facilities.
- The waste many associate with efforts to build a national missile defense system (which failed a third consecutive, highly scripted test in February).
- The effect of a number of troubling developments that may erode public confidence in the military as an institution, including the obfuscation of NFL star Par Tillman’s death in Afghanistan by friendly fire; revelations about manipulation of prewar intelligence by Pentagon officials; the inability to provide enough armor and proper equipment; and recruiting irregularities.

There are likely just as many who could make a convincing case for Secretary Rumsfeld to continue to serve; Afghanistan-- a success of sorts, despite the loss of almost 20 special operations personnel in late June in an insurgent attack; positive developments on force transformation; and support for embedded reporting in war zones. There is also reluctance to “switch horses” in the middle of a war.

Overlaying both the positive and the negative is Rumsfeld’s leadership style. Not much of an upside there. At times arrogant, abrasive and condescending, Rumsfeld has managed to alienate members of Congress, fellow Cabinet officers, and his senior military leaders.

He who runs the Department of Defense need not be popular, but he must have the confidence of those who he leads. One thing absent from the not-so-recently-begun debate on whether Rumsfeld ought to resign is the support he enjoys, or lacks, among those in uniform. There is reason to believe he has lost the confidence of his senior military leaders and much of the armed forces writ large.

There is one way to find out.

There exists in the military something called a “Command Climate Survey.” It is a leadership tool, available to commanders at all levels, that asks troops for their thoughts on the quality of their training, equipment, and leaders.

I propose such a survey that could be used to take the pulse of the Defense Department, to get a feel for how service members think things are going in terms of Iraq, the global war on terrorism, the direction of reforms within the armed forces, and the quality of leadership in the department.

The idea of doing such a survey might genuinely appeal to Rumsfeld. He may see it as a useful means to measure morale; to confirm or deny that the Department of Defense is on the right track.

Despite an effort to design a survey that is both specific and fair, some may see it otherwise and interpret the very thought of such a survey as disloyal.

I don’t see it that way.

“I _____, having been appointed an officer in the Army of the United States, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservations or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter; so help me God.”

This is the oath of office of a commissioned officer in the United States military. The supremacy of the Constitution in that oath is unambiguous, intentional, and correct.

In terms of the survey that follows, I leave it to the respondents to decide to what, or to whom their loyalties lie.

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Note: Please go to the next page for the online survey and results.

21 January 2006

Below is the survey that was posted on the Army Times website in summer 2005.
286 people participated in the survey. These results have not yet been published. – TR

Army Times Command Climate Survey
Surveyed Unit: The Department of Defense

1. What is your branch and component of service?

113	Army
32	Navy
57	Air Force
19	Marine Corps
24	Army National Guard
10	Air National Guard
0	Army Reserve
0	Naval Reserve
0	Air Force Reserve
0	Marine Forces Reserve
24	Defense civilian
7	Defense contractor

2. What is your current status?

196	Active
34	National Guard/ reserve
25	Retired
24	DoD civilian
7	Defense contractor

3. What is your paygrade?

12	E1 - E3
77	E4 - E6
64	E7 - E-9
12	WO
32	O1 - O-3
58	O4 - O-6
0	O7 - O-10
1	GS 1 - GS 5
7	GS 6 - GS 10
15	GS 11 - GS 15
1	SES
7	Defense contractor

4. Where are you serving?

20	a. In the Military District of Washington.
168	b. Outside MDW, but within the continental U.S.
96	c. Outside the U.S.
2	No answer

5. Do you have contact with senior OSD leaders?

4	a. Daily
14	b. Often
33	c. Sometimes
235	d. Rarely/never

6. How would you rate the overall competence of senior civilian leadership in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)?

29	a. Excellent
47	b. Good
51	c. Average
76	d. Poor
64	e. Awful
19	f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.

7. Choose from the choices below to complete the following statement:

The OSD civilian leadership _____ the recommendations and advice of the senior uniformed officers assigned to the Pentagon and the major combatant commands.

- 16 a. consistently seeks and carefully considers
- 31 b. Usually seeks and considers
- 51 c. Sometimes seeks and considers
- 44 d. Rarely seek and considers
- 81 e. Often ignores
- 63 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.

8. You have been selected to be a spokesman for those with whom you serve (in a unit, office or directorate) How would you describe the level of confidence you and your uniformed colleagues have in the wisdom of the senior civilian leadership of OSD (Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Acting Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England) concerning the geo-strategic aspects of foreign and defense policy?

- 21 a. Absolute confidence.
- 44 b. High degree of confidence.
- 45 c. Average degree of confidence.
- 92 d. Low degree of confidence.
- 73 e. Little or no confidence.
- 11 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.

9. You are at a relative's house for Sunday dinner. Your brother-in-law is talking to you about work. He says to you, "Boy, that Rumsfeld guy is something else. I've never seen such an arrogant person." Your response would be:

- 49 a. Don't confuse self-confidence with arrogance. He really is a very capable guy.
- 6 b. He would be a tough guy to work for, but in all honesty, he gets the job done. I respect him.
- 0 c. Honestly, I have only seen him on television.
- 86 d. I work fairly often with him/I've seen him in action. He's pretty much as you see; no worse, no better.
- 124 e. You're right. Pass the potatoes.
- 19 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.
- 2 No answer

10. In the planning and execution of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Rumsfeld has:

- 59 a. Played a decisive role.
- 63 b. Played an important role.
- 94 c. Meddled unnecessarily.
- 30 d. Played a role that was neither particularly positive nor negative.
- 15 e. Played very little role.
- 25 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.

11. In the area of transformation, Rumsfeld:

- 4 a. Is making no mistakes; hitting all the right notes; batting a thousand on all counts.
- 67 b. Is on the right track.
- 48 c. Has some good ideas, but I do not think they are revolutionary.
- 57 d. Is not focusing on emerging and future threats.
- 94 e. Is wasting billions of dollars.
- 16 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.

12. In the area of defense research, development and technology, Rumsfeld:

- 7 a. Is making no mistakes; hitting all the right notes; batting a thousand on all counts.
- 62 b. Is on the right track.
- 42 c. Has some good ideas, but I do not think they are revolutionary.
- 67 d. Is not focusing on emerging and future threats.
- 64 e. Is wasting billions of dollars.
- 43 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.
- 1 No answer

13. In the area of institutional reform, Rumsfeld:

- 6 a. Is making no mistakes; hitting all the right notes; batting a thousand on all counts.
- 58 b. Is on the right track.
- 57 c. Has some good ideas, but I do not think they are revolutionary.
- 54 d. Is not focusing on emerging and future threats.
- 82 e. Is wasting billions of dollars.
- 29 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.

14. In the area of operational concepts, Rumsfeld:

- 6 a. Is making no mistakes; hitting all the right notes; batting a thousand on all counts.
- 64 b. Is on the right track.
- 39 c. Has some good ideas, but I do not think they are revolutionary.
- 73 d. Is not focusing on emerging and future threats.
- 73 e. Is wasting billions of dollars.
- 28 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.
- 3 No answer

15. In the area of acquisition, Rumsfeld:

- 7 a. Is making no mistakes; hitting all the right notes; batting a thousand on all counts.
- 45 b. Is on the right track.
- 56 c. Has some good ideas, but I do not think they are revolutionary.
- 51 d. Is not focusing on emerging and future threats.
- 83 e. Is wasting billions of dollars.
- 43 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.
- 1 No answer

16. The public hears a lot about “exhausting the force” related to recurring troop deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. What is your take on this?

- 19 a. The force remains strong.
- 36 b. Sure, we are being pushed, but this is why we joined the service.
- 10 c. I do not note anything particularly unusual in my unit.
- 155 d. The strain on service members, and families is a concern.
- 65 e. The strain on service members, units and families is a big concern.
- 1 No answer

17. How much time have you spent in a combat zone in the past 10 years?

- 11 a. More than three years.
- 25 b. Between two and three years.
- 70 c. Between one and two years.
- 96 d. Less than one year.
- 84 e. Never.

18. How strongly do you agree with this statement: “While I am deployed, my dependents are well taken care of”?

- 37 a. Strongly agree.
- 54 b. Agree.
- 83 c. Somewhat Agree.
- 46 d. Disagree.
- 26 e. Strongly disagree.
- 40 f. No opinion/I do not have dependents.

19. Regarding the global war on terrorism:

- 36 a. We are absolutely on the right track
- 77 b. I think we are on the right track.
- 67 c. I am not sure that we are on the right track.
- 60 d. I think we are on the wrong track.
- 46 e. We are on the wrong track.

20. As a leader, Donald Rumsfeld is:

- 30 a. Superb and capable.
- 42 b. The best guy I can think of for the job.
- 12 c. A lousy secretary of defense, but a good secretary of war.
- 126 d. A lousy secretary of defense
- 46 e. A 20th-century guy in a 21st-century job.
- 28 f. I do not feel qualified to answer this question.
- 2 No answer

21. Should Donald Rumsfeld keep his job?

- 82 a. Yes.
- 170 b. No.
- 34 c. No opinion.
- 1 No answer

22. Has Donald Rumsfeld’s leadership and performance as secretary of defense had an effect on your propensity to reenlist and continue to serve?

- 39 a. Yes, and I’m eager to continue serving.
- 78 b. Yes, and I can’t wait to leave.
- 167 c. He has had no effect on my propensity to serve.
- 2 No answer

23. Has Donald Rumsfeld's leadership and performance as secretary of defense affected your feelings about whether you would recommend military service to others?

38 a. Yes, and I would highly recommend it.

103 b. Yes, and I would not recommend it at all.

145 c. He has had no effect on my feelings about whether I would recommend military service to others.
